



## **Community Health Worker Certification for Experienced CHWs**

(formerly known as the grandparenting process)

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

---

#### **Community Health Worker Certification**

##### **1. Who is a Community Health Worker?**

A Community Health Worker (CHW) is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of, or has an unusually close understanding of, the community served. This trusting relationship enables a CHW to serve as a liaison to, link to, or intermediary between health and social services and the community to facilitate access to services and improve the quality and cultural competence of service delivery. A CHW also builds individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, the provision of information to support individuals in the community, social support and advocacy.

##### **2. What are examples of job duties of a CHW?**

The job duties of a CHW vary depending on the community served and the employer. In general, job duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Facilitate health care and social service system navigation;
- Assist with lay care coordination;
- Connect individuals to health and human service resources, such as health insurance, food, housing and other health information;
- Assist individuals with understanding their health condition(s) and develop strategies to support their health and well-being;
- Deliver health information using culturally appropriate terms and concepts;
- Provide informal counseling, support and follow-up;
- Advocate for local health needs;
- Conduct home visits or meet with individuals outside of the clinical setting;
- Translate for individuals and health care/social service providers; and
- Other job duties that align with the definition of a CHW

**3. My work duties fit with the CHW definition, but I have a different job title. Am I still eligible to apply for CHW certification?**

Maybe. Community health workers go by many titles, depending on where they work, who they work for and what they do. Common titles include community health representative, community health advisor, community health outreach worker, outreach specialist, patient navigator, lay health advisor, health coach, community health coach, lay health advocate, family advocate, community health care worker, health educator, liaison, promoter, outreach worker, promotores de salud, peer counselor, health interpreter, public health aide, and more.

**4. What is the role of the Maryland Department of Health in CHW Certification?**

As required by the [Annotated Code of Maryland, Health-General Article, Title 13, Subtitle 37](#) (House Bill 0490 / Senate Bill 0163 of 2018, Chapter 441, Public Health – Community Health Workers – Advisory Committee and Certification), the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) must establish the processes for CHW certification and accreditation of CHW training programs, with the advisement of the State CHW Advisory Committee. MDH serves as the certifying body for statewide CHW certification. The Community Health Worker Certification team is housed within the Office of Population Health Improvement and oversees the process to certify CHWs and approve CHW certification training programs.

**5. What are the core competencies of a CHW?**

Community Health Worker core competencies identify abilities and skills that a CHW is expected to demonstrate within their profession. Maryland's nine CHW core competencies were established through the work of the [2014 - 2015 Workgroup on Workforce Development for Community Health Workers](#), the [State Community Health Worker Advisory Committee](#), analysis of national and other state core competencies and formal and informal input from a wide variety of stakeholders including Community Health Workers. Maryland's CHW core competencies are:

1. Advocacy and community capacity building skills
2. Effective oral and written communication skills
3. Cultural competency
4. Understanding of ethics and confidentiality issues
5. Knowledge of local resources and system navigation
6. Care coordination skills
7. Teaching skills to promote healthy behavior change
8. Outreach methods and strategies
9. Understanding of public health concepts and health literacy

See the [Maryland Community Health Worker Core Competencies](#) document for the general skills and abilities that define each core competency.

## 6. What is the provision for CHW certification for experienced CHWs?

The provision for an experienced CHW is a certification pathway based on work experience obtained between October 1, 2013 and October 1, 2018 OR five years prior to the date of the application submission, and demonstrated knowledge of the CHW core competencies.

## Eligibility for Experienced CHWs to Apply for Certification

### 1. Who is eligible to apply for certification through this process?

All individuals who meet the criteria below are eligible to apply:

- Must be 18 years old or older;
- Occupied as a CHW on October 1, 2018;
- Have 2,000 hours of CHW paid or volunteer experience between October 1, 2013 and October 1, 2018 OR five years prior to the date of the application submission;
- Be proficient in Maryland's [CHW core competencies](#); and
- Submit a minimum of two [letters of validation](#) from a current or former employer, supervisor or agency representative.

### 2. Do I need to have 2,000 *consecutive* hours of work experience?

No. Experience hours do not have to be consecutive hours.

Experience may consist of either paid and/or volunteer hours that total a minimum of 2,000 hours five years prior to October 1, 2018 (between October 1, 2013 and October 1, 2018) OR five years prior to the date of the application submission.

### 3. Do I have to be a U.S. citizen to apply for CHW certification?

No. The certification application for experienced CHWs requires documentation of age, however this documentation will not be used to verify citizenship. Documents for age verification include municipal identification card, driver's license, birth certificate, military ID, state ID, passport, employment authorization card, permanent resident card, community identification card and others. Non-U.S. government-issued documents are acceptable forms of age verification.

### 4. Do I have to be a resident of Maryland to apply for CHW certification?

No. The certification application requires an applicant to submit a mailing address so that the Department can contact an applicant, if needed. The mailing address may be different from your home address and does not have to be an address in the state of Maryland.

### 5. Is a background check required?

No. A background check is not required to apply for CHW certification.

## 6. How were the eligibility requirements established?

As a result of the [Annotated Code of Maryland, Health-General Article, Title 13, Subtitle 37](#) (House Bill 0490 / Senate Bill 0163 of 2018, Chapter 441, Public Health – Community Health Workers – Advisory Committee and Certification), MDH established the process and criteria for CHW certification and approval of CHW training programs, with the advisement of the Maryland CHW Advisory Committee.

The eligibility requirements were established based on the research and recommendations from the [2014 - 2015 Workgroup on Workforce Development for Community Health Workers](#), the [State CHW Advisory Committee](#), a comprehensive analysis of national and other state certification processes and an extensive process that included formal and informal input from a wide variety of stakeholders including CHWs and CHW employers.

## Applying for CHW Certification

### 1. How long will applications for certification for experienced CHWs be accepted?

Applications for certification for experienced CHWs will be accepted between September 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020. The last date to submit an application for CHW certification through this process is March 31, 2020.

### 2. Is certification the same as licensure?

No. MDH offers a CHW certification *not* CHW licensure. CHW certification is voluntary and not mandated by the State of Maryland. CHW certification is not required to serve as a CHW in the State of Maryland.

### 3. Is certification voluntary?

Yes. CHW certification is voluntary and is not required by the state of Maryland.

### 4. Is there a cost for certification?

No. Submitting an application for certification is free of charge.

### 5. Where can I access the certification application?

CHW certification application instructions, materials, and online portal can be found at: <https://pophealth.health.maryland.gov/Community-Health-Workers/Pages/Certification-Program.aspx>.

**6. What do I need to know about downloadable forms including the letter of validation?**

[Adobe reader](#) is required to complete downloadable forms including the letter of validation.

Prior to completing a downloadable form, save the form to your computer and close the original view. Open the saved document from your computer location and enter information.

**7. Can I receive help completing my application?**

Yes. If you have questions about your certification application, contact the CHW Certification Program team by email at [MDH.CHWApplications@Maryland.gov](mailto:MDH.CHWApplications@Maryland.gov) or by phone at 410-767-5971.

**8. Should I submit my letters of validation at the same time as my application?**

Yes. Your application will be considered incomplete if you do not submit a minimum of two letters of validation with your application.

## **Application Review Process**

**1. Who will review my application and how long will it take?**

Your application for certification will be reviewed by the MDH Community Health Worker Certification team. Applications will be processed within 90 calendar days of receipt.

**2. How is my demonstrated knowledge of the core competencies determined?**

An applicant's demonstrated knowledge of the core competencies is verified in the [letter of validation](#) by a current or former supervisor, employer or agency representative. The letter of validation includes a section for the applicant to briefly describe how their CHW paid or volunteer experience demonstrates/demonstrated their knowledge and skills for each core competency. The agency current or former supervisor, employer or agency representative will review the description and verify if the applicant has successfully demonstrated the identified core competencies.

**3. How will I know if my application is received?**

The applicant will receive a confirmation email once the application has been submitted.

**4. How will I know about the decision of my application?**

An email will be sent to the applicant to inform them about the decision, or to request more information, within 90 days of submission.

**5. Do I need to renew my application after it has been approved?**

Yes. Certified CHWs in Maryland will be required to renew their certification every two (2) years. The certified CHW will be required to submit documentation of 20 hours of a broad range of professional development activities and written explanation of acquired knowledge and/or skill application of duties. More information on professional development activities and renewal information will be available at the [Maryland CHW Certification webpage](#).